Preliminary Summary of Information

Submitted to the Commission on Chicago Landmarks in October 2004

Ravenswood Club Building

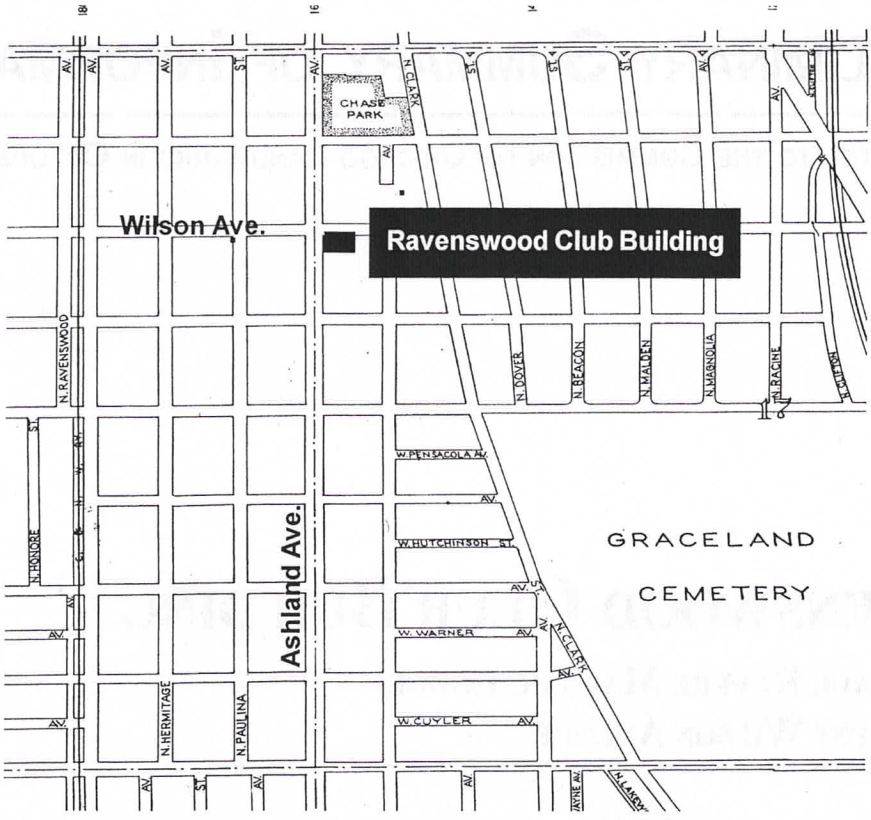
(Now Paul Revere Masonic Lodge)
1521 West Wilson Avenue

Built: 1899
Addition: 1902

Architects: J. E. O. Pridmore
Niels Buck (Addition)

Built in 1899, the Ravenswood Club Building is a rare and unusual wood-frame club building built for a local social club. Organized in 1898, the Ravenswood Club was founded for the purpose of furnishing social and intellectual offerings to its members and featured such activities as drama classes, lectures, and musicals. Other social organizations, including the Ravenswood Women's Club and the Ravenswood Improvement Association, also occupied the building and used it to focus their attention on community improvement issues.

In 1920 the Ravenswood Club Building was bought by the Paul Revere Masonic Lodge and was used as a lodge by that fraternal organization until 2003. The original clubhouse building was designed by J. E. O. Pridmore, a Chicago architect significant for the design of many fine period revival buildings, especially apartment buildings, churches, and theaters. Most notably, he was the architect of the Bush Temple of Music, a designated Chicago Landmark. The Ravenswood Club is designed in the Classical Revival style, an architectural style popular in Chicago in the early twentieth century and is distinguished by a full-width front porch, Classical columns and pilasters, and shutters with Masonic emblems.



Top: The Ravenswood Club Building is located at the corner of Ashland and Wilson Avenues in the Uptown community. Bottom: The front (west) elevation of the building facing Ashland Avenue.

History of the Club Movement in Chicago

Starting with the City's earliest residents, Chicagoans have formed clubs and organizations of all kinds and sizes that claimed all kinds of purposes. Ethnic clubs provided safe havens for immigrants and provided services and skills they needed to cope with daily life in Chicago and the United States; as immigrant population slowed, the same clubs helped preserve cultural traditions from "home." Religious denominations created organizations to provide services to congregations. Improvement associations brought neighbors together to solve community problems and welcome new residents. Fraternal organizations, health clubs, garden clubs and women's clubs also belong to Chicago's rich tradition of social organizations. The Ravenswood Club is part of this movement.

Among Chicago's largest social clubs and service organizations are the City's fraternal societies. The Freemasons were the oldest and most prestigious fraternal society in the City, and other fraternal organizations imitated its ceremonies. The 1893 publication of the Chicago Directory of Lodges and Benevolent Societies in Chicago highlighted the popularity of fraternal societies in Chicago during the late nineteenth century. It listed various kinds of Masons, the Independent Order of Odd Fellows, the Ancient Order of United Workmen, the Knights of Pythias, the Independent Order of the Free Sons of Israel and many other fraternal organizations. The best-known fraternal organizations in the United States have been the Masons, the Odd Fellows and, most recently, the Benevolent and Protective Order of the Elks. Chicago's first Masonic lodge was chartered in 1843 and the Chicago Masons Temple was constructed in 1892. The Odd Fellows chartered their first Chicago lodge in 1844. By 1923 this order counted 89 Chicago lodges with nearly 28,000 members. The first Elks lodge in Chicago was chartered in 1844 and which by 1923 counted 89 Chicago lodges with nearly 28,000 members.

Health, fitness and athletic clubs form a rich part of Chicago's history. At the end of the nineteenth century, the most prominent athletic clubs were private, exclusive establishments founded by elite Chicagoans to foster business and social networking. Founded in 1890, the Chicago Athletic Association (CAA) erected its ornate clubhouse on fashionable Michigan Avenue in 1893. It was among the very few big-city athletic clubs to survive the economic depression. The Medinah Athletic Club was built on North Michigan Avenue in 1929 for members of the Masonic order and included an Olympic-sized swimming pool. Belle Ogden Armour and Paulina Harriette Lyon founded the Woman's Athletic Club (WAC) of Chicago in 1898. The United States' first private athletic club for women, it was intended to provide women with the same opportunities for exercise, relaxation, and friendship that were available in the men's clubs (the Woman's Athletic Club Building is a designated Chicago Landmark). Chicagoans that did not have access to the private athletic clubs used parks and park fieldhouses as their athletic locales at the turn of the century.

At its height between 1890 and 1920, the women's club movement extended its concerns of child and family welfare to social motherhood, as many women's clubs promoted civic

betterment, in addition to philanthropic work. Clubwomen encouraged women's suffrage and legislation for children and working mothers. The Chicago Women's Club stood out as among the most active. Formed in 1876, the club originally focused on self and social improvements. By the late 1880s, their efforts turned to state-building reform, most notably the improvement of state facilities for dependent children, orphans, and female prisoners, as well as legislation for compulsory education and against child labor. Immigrant women also formed their own clubs, many of which were parish organizations and dramatic, literary, and singing church circles.

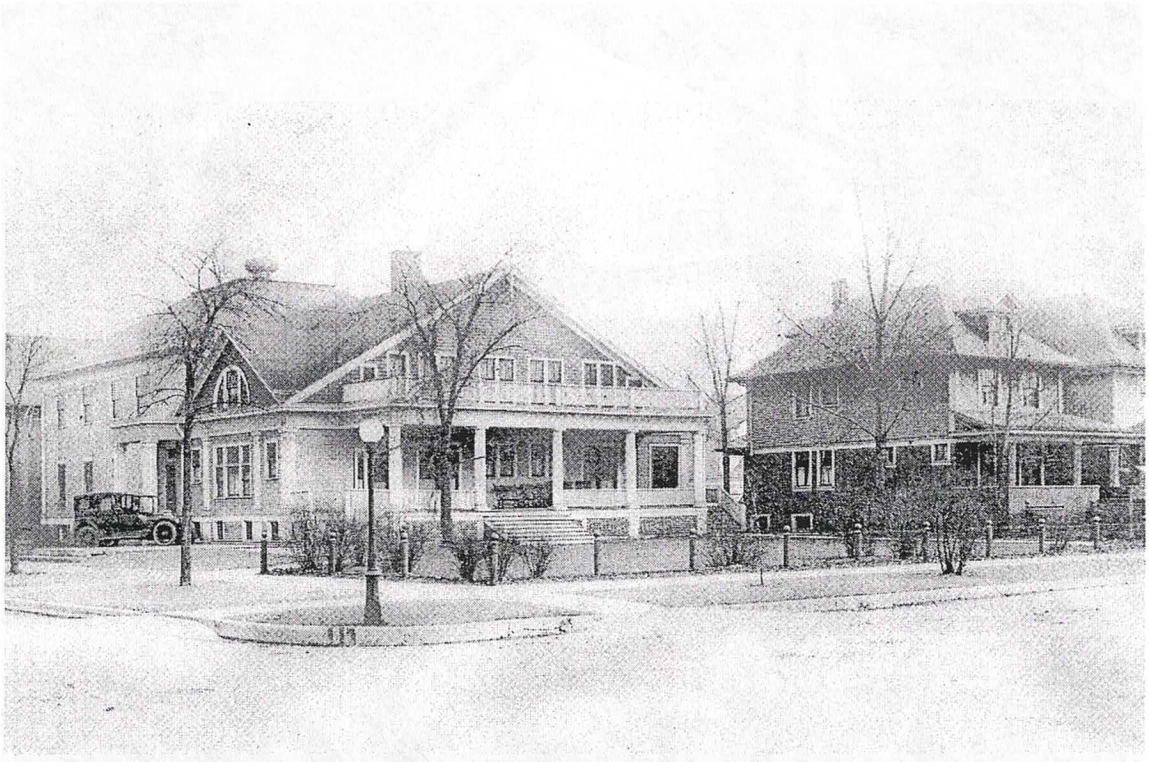
History and Description of the Ravenswood Club

Organized on October 29, 1898, the Ravenswood Club was a social and civic club. According to its by-laws, the club's purpose was "To maintain a family club for the purpose of furnishing social and intellectual advantages to its members." Membership was limited to men only over the age of 21, although club benefits were extended to wives and immediate family members but without the right to vote. By 1902 the club had 156 members and included such prominent area residents as Ossian C. Simonds, the distinguished landscape architect, and Niels Buck, an architect who in 1902 designed a rear addition to the clubhouse. The club's calendar of events from 1910-11 reveals that the club offered such activities as drama classes, lectures and musicals.

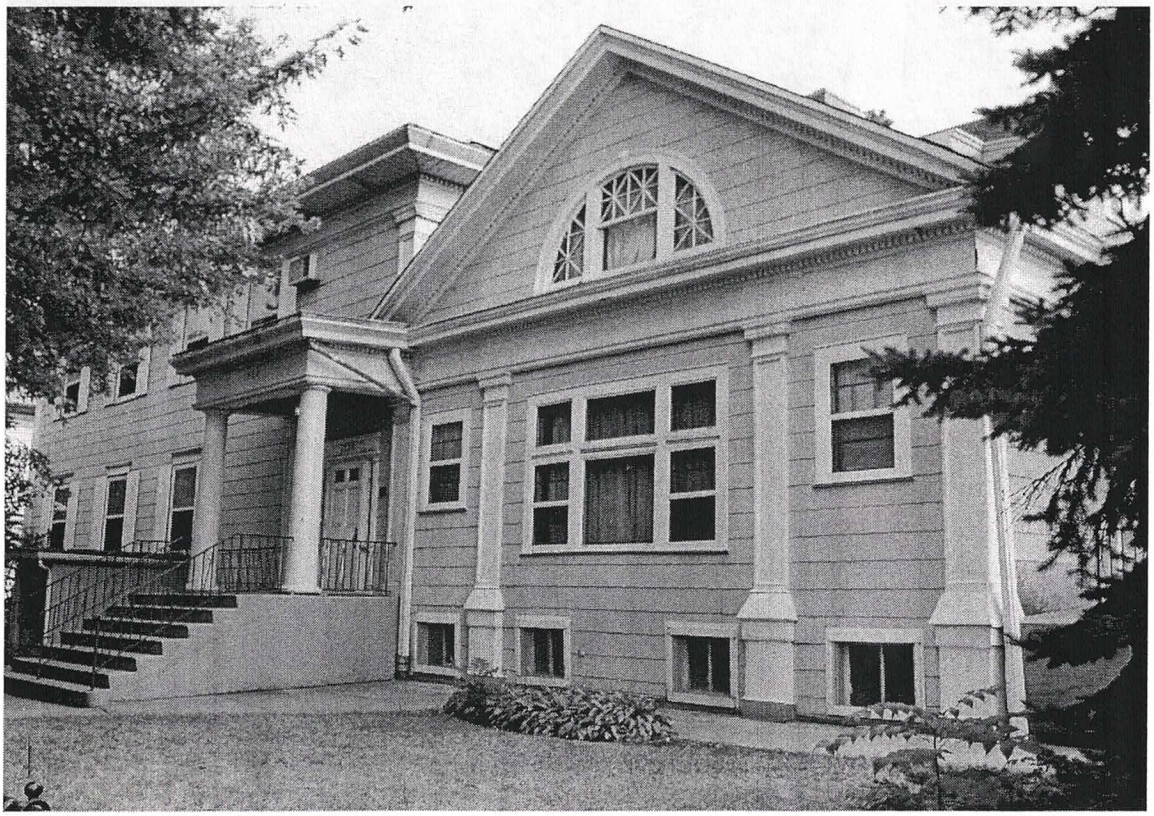
The Ravenswood Women's Club, an auxiliary club formed by the Ravenswood Club member's wives, also took quarters in the clubhouse shortly after the building was completed. The Women's Club founded other educational and civic organizations, including the Ravenswood Woman's Literary Club and the Ravenswood Improvement Association. The Ravenswood Improvement Association advocated for better supervision of nickel theaters, supported a ban on billboards displaying "obscene" pictures, supported the establishment of a branch library, and undertook philanthropic projects. Other social organizations may have used the Ravenswood Clubhouse building as well.

The Ravenswood Club building was built in the late summer of 1899 and was designed by J. E.O. Pridmore, a prominent Edgewater architect. The *Chicago Tribune* of August 27, 1899, noted that the building was designed "in old colonial style of architecture, with wide porch extending the entire length of the building." The clubhouse contained a main floor auditorium seating 325 people, quarters for the Ravenswood Women's Club, parlors, stage and dressing rooms. The building's second floor included the balcony of the auditorium, women's parlors, cloakrooms and toilets. In the basement were a billiard room, bowling alleys, quarters for the houseman, and heating and lighting plants.

The original 1899 portion of the Ravenswood Club building is a rectangular, one-and-half-story frame building designed in the Classical Revival style. The building is covered by a wide front-facing gable roof with a smaller secondary intersecting gable roof on the north side of the building. The entire building is currently covered by replacement asbestos siding and the roof by



Top: A historic view of the Ravenswood Club Building. The clubhouse is the left building in the photograph. Bottom: Members of the Ravenswood Women's Club, 1905.



Top: The front elevation of the Ravenswood Club building facing Ashland Avenue. Bottom: The north elevation of the building facing Wilson Avenue. The 1902 addition to the clubhouse appears to the left in the photograph.

modern asphalt shingles. Originally the building was sided with wood clapboards which may exist under the asphalt siding. The front (west) elevation of the building facing Ashland Avenue is dominated by a one-story porch running the length of the building. Five Classical columns carrying a simple dentiled architrave support the porch. The front entrance to building is located at the south end of the porch and includes a pair of flanking glazed sidelights. Fenestration, most of it original, is generally two-over-one double hung sash. The north (Wilson Avenue) elevation of the building includes a pedimented gable with a central round arched window. The architrave of the front porch continues around the north side of the building and is supported by Classical pilasters. A second entrance to the building covered by a small porch supported by square posts is also located on this side of the structure. The entrance door includes flanking sidelights identical to those found on the front elevation.

In 1902 a two-story addition designed by architect Niels Buck was made to the rear (east) of the original clubhouse building. The addition continues the Classical Revival style of the earlier building. It is an almost square two-story structure covered by a low pyramidal roof. Classical pilasters identical to those found on the earlier portion of the building detail the corners of the addition. Original fenestration is one-over-one double hung sash with simple plank shutters which display a sawed-out Masonic emblem. A Masonic emblem also appears in the front gable of the building.

The Classical Revival style of the Ravenswood Club became popular in the 1890s in the aftermath of the World's Columbian Exposition, held in Chicago in 1893. Based on the Classical architecture of ancient Greece and Rome, as well as later interpretations by Renaissance and Baroque architects, the Classical Revival style often utilized forms such as triangular pediments, Classical columns and moldings, and keystone-embellished lintels.

Later History

The Ravenswood Club continued in existence through the 1910s until the club sold the building to the Paul Revere Masonic Lodge in 1920. The history of the Paul Revere Lodge began on October 25, 1916, when the fraternal organization was chartered. The lodge was named for Revolutionary War hero Paul Revere, who was also a Mason. For the first two years of its existence, the organization rented a hall at Broadway and Wilson Avenues for its meetings. On April 1, 1920, the Illinois Commandery #72, Grand Templars of Illinois invited the Paul Revere Lodge to join them in ownership of the Ravenswood Club building. On November 18, 1920 the agreement was consummated, and the Commandery paid $35,000 for the former Ravenswood Club building, with the Paul Revere Lodge assuming one half that cost. Immediately thereafter the Lodge moved into the building. In 1927, after the Commandery decided that the building was no longer suitable for their needs, the Paul Revere Lodge took sole possession of the building.

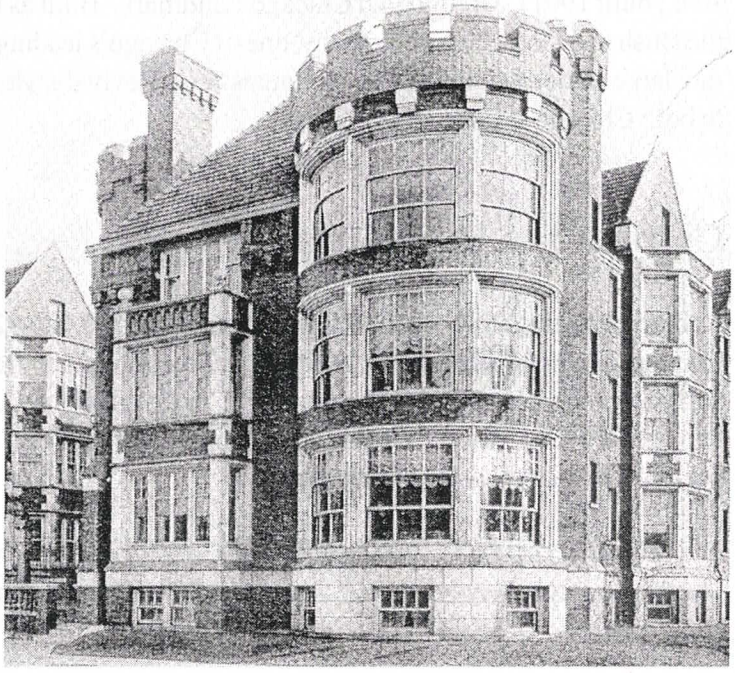
Activities in the Paul Revere Lodge were similar those in other Masonic lodges. Masonry is deeply involved with helping people, and the great majority of that help goes to people who are not Masons. The membership of the Paul Revere Lodge, which had grown to nearly 700 before the Great Depression, likewise sought to better the world and themselves and were involved with a variety of philanthropic activities, both large and small. Members of the lodge were also good stewards of the building, undertaking many repairs to the building themselves, especially during the lean years of the Great Depression. On September 4, 2003, after almost eighty-three years of meeting in the former Ravenswood Club building, the brethren of Paul Revere Lodge made the difficult decision to put the property up for sale.

Architect J. E. O. Pridmore

John Edmund Oldaker Pridmore was born in England on July 18, 1864 where he was a graduate of Greenhill College in Birmingham. His family came to the United States in 1880 and later in 1883 settled in Chicago. He first found work as an apprentice draftsman before beginning a five-year partnership with Leon Stanhope in 1893. In 1899 he opened his own office and remained in private practice for the rest of his professional life for more than forty years until his death on February 1, 1940.

As an architect Pridmore developed a reputation for beautifully crafted buildings designed in the variety of historic styles favored by Chicagoans during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Most of his commissions were for larger projects, and he specialized in theatres and apartment buildings. He was a resident of the Edgewater neighborhood for most of his life and several of his finest buildings grace this neighborhood. A member of the Church of the Atonement (5749 N. Kenmore Ave.), Pridmore rebuilt the church and added a parish house in the 1910s and early 1920s. His Manor House Apartments (1021-29 W. Bryn Mawr Ave.; built in 1908) and Beaconsfield-Hollywood Apartments (1055-65 W. Hollywood Ave.; built in 1913) are excellent examples of English Tudor Revival design. Pridmore also designed several other churches of note, including the People's Church (941 W. Lawrence Ave.; built in 1925), which housed the ministry of famed preacher Preston Bradley, and the Episcopal Chapel of St. John at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

However, it was as a consummate designer of theaters that Pridmore shone. An expert on theater planning, he published several articles on theater design and acoustics. He designed several theaters for stage productions, including the Cort Theater (126-32 N. Dearborn St.; built in 1909; demolished) and the College Theater of DePaul University (northeast corner, Sheffield and Webster; built in 1907; demolished). Movie theaters of note included the Sheridan (4038-48 N. Sheridan Rd.; 1927; demolished), with its blue-and-white Classical-style pediment, and the Nortown (6320-32 N. Western Ave.; built in 1931; altered) with its "atmospheric-design" auditorium with decoration resembling a picturesque sea village, complete with murals of sailing ships seen through arcades.



Architect J. E. O. Pridmore (top left) specialized in picturesque buildings in a variety of historic styles. His designs include the Manor House apartment building designed in the Tudor Revival style (top right) and the Bush Temple of Music (a designated Chicago Landmark) designed in the grand French Renaissance Revival style (bottom).

Perhaps Pridmore's most grandiose building is the Bush Temple of Music (100 W. Chicago Ave.; built 1901), a designated Chicago Landmark. Built as the headquarters and showroom of the Bush and Gerts Piano Company, one of Chicago's leading piano companies, the building is a rare large-scale example of French Renaissance Revival-style architecture, a highly unusual style in both Chicago and the United States.

Criteria for Designation

According to the Municipal Code of Chicago (Sect. 2 120 620 and 630), the Commission on Chicago Landmarks has the authority to make a preliminary recommendation of landmark designation for a building, structure, object, or district if the Commission determines it meets two or more of the stated "criteria for landmark designation," as well as possesses a significant degree of its historic design integrity.

The following should be considered by the Commission on Chicago Landmarks in determining whether to recommend that the Ravenswood Club Building be designated as a Chicago Landmark.

Criterion 1: Critical Part of the City's History
Its value as an example of the architectural, cultural, economic, historic, social, or other aspect of the heritage of the City of Chicago, State of Illinois or the United States.

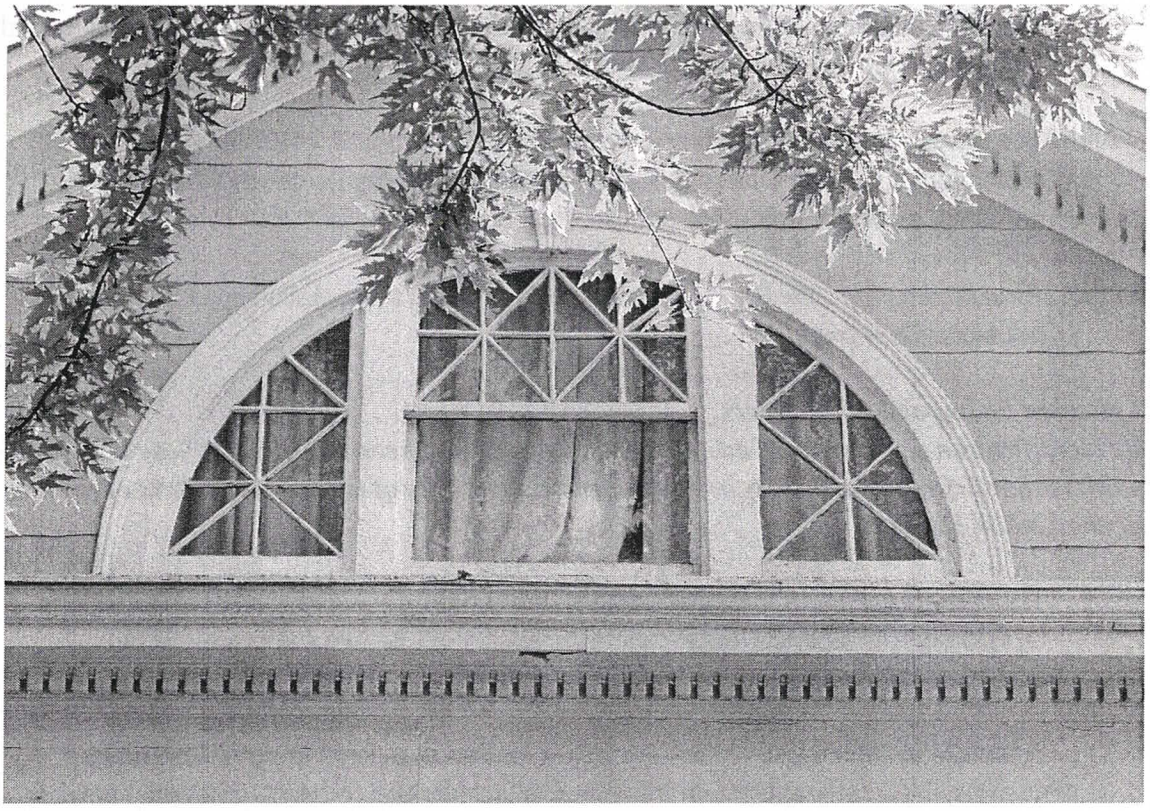
- The Ravenswood Club Building reflects the long-standing tradition Chicagoans have had to form clubs and organizations of all kinds and sizes for a variety of purposes. A wide variety of ethnic, social and service clubs have all been important in the development of Chicago.

- Organized in 1898, the Ravenswood Club and other social and civic clubs that subsequently were founded and met in the clubhouse building focused their attention on community improvement issues, in addition to offering drama classes, lectures, and musicals for club members in the Edgewater community.

- The Paul Revere Lodge, a Masonic fraternal club that occupied the Ravenswood clubhouse building from 1920-2003, continued the Ravenswood Club's history of social and philanthropic services.

Citerion 4: Important Architecture
Its exemplification of an architectural type or style distinguished by innovation, rarity, uniqueness, or overall quality of design, detail, materials, or craftsmanship.

- The Ravenswood Club Building exemplifies the influence of the Classical Revival style in its design. The Classical style, which received much of its design impetus from the 1893



Top: This round arched window graces the pedimented gable of the north elevation of the Ravenswood Club Building. Bottom: A Classical Revival-style porch extends across the front elevation of the clubhouse.

World's Columbian Exposition, was an architectural style favored by many period revival architects in the early twentieth century.

- The Ravenswood Club Building is distinguished for its quality of detailing and craftsmanship in the Classical Revival style, especially its use of Classical columns, pilasters, and other details.

- As a property type, the Ravenswood Club Building is a rare and unusual wood-frame institutional building.

Criterion 5: Important Architect
Its identification as the work of an architect, designer, engineer, or builder whose individual work is significant in the history or development of the City of Chicago, the State of Illinois, or the United States.

- The original section of the Ravenswood Club Building was designed by architect J. E. O. Pridmore, an architect significant in the history of Chicago and especially the Edgewater community.

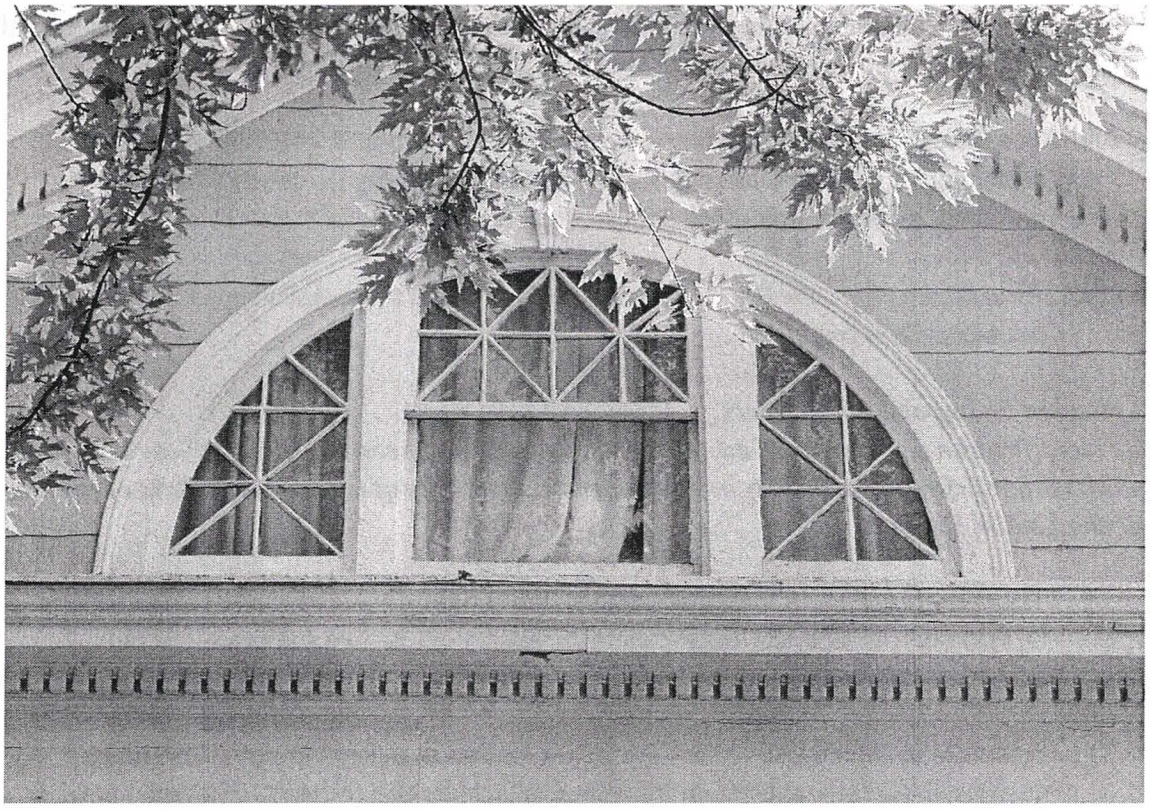
- Pridmore is considered one of the City's skilled designers in period revival designs, especially apartment buildings, churches and theaters. His most notable designs include the Bush Temple of Music, a large-scale example of French Renaissance Revival architecture in the City; his Manor House Apartments and Beaconsfield-Hollywood Apartments built in the English Tudor Revival design; and the "atmospheric" design of the Nortown Theater.

Integrity Criterion
Its integrity is preserved in light of its location, design, setting, materials, workmanship and ability to express its historic community, architecture or aesthetic interest or value.

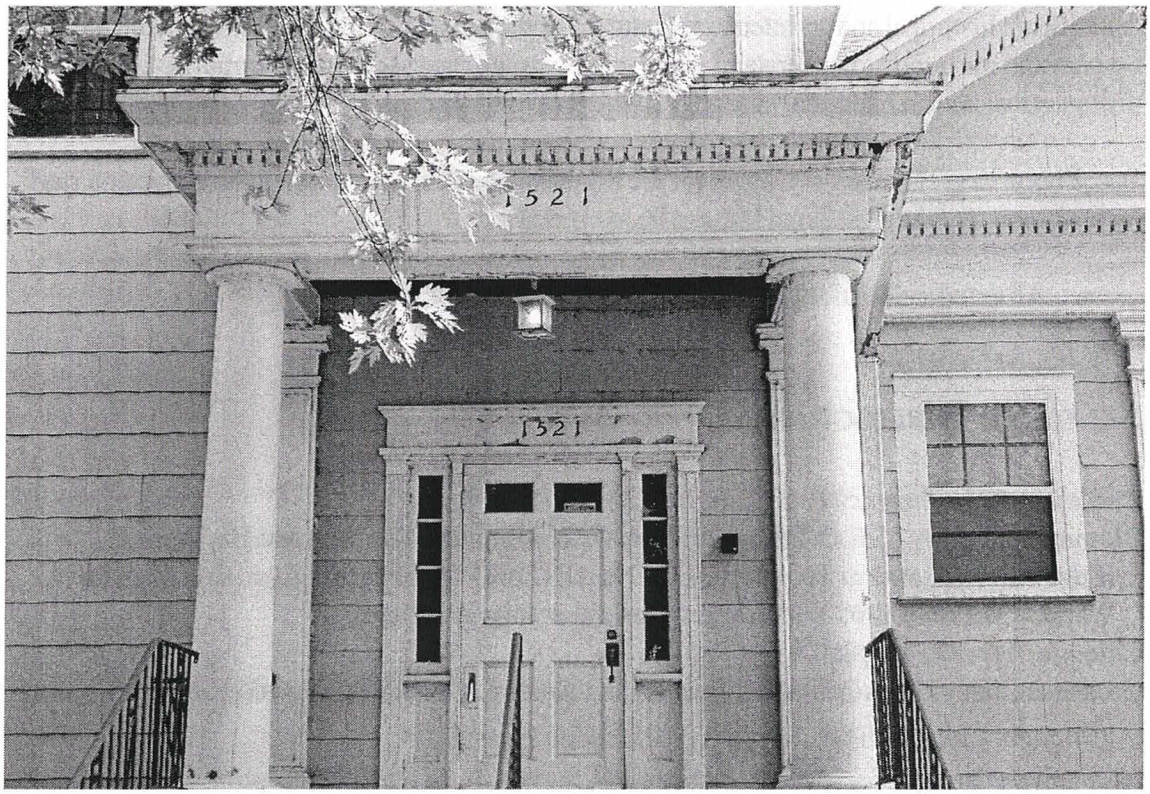
The Ravenswood Club Building possesses fine physical integrity, displaying through its site, scale and overall design, its historic relationship to the Uptown community. The major exterior change to the building is the covering of the structure's original wood clapboard siding with asbestos siding. The original siding may remain underneath and, regardless, does not unduly detract from the building's historic appearance and is an easily reversible change. Other minor changes include the addition of modern roof shingles, modification of a few front elevation doorway openings into windows, and the loss of the front porch's first and second story historic railings. Again, these changes are largely reversible and do not detract markedly from the building's historic appearance.

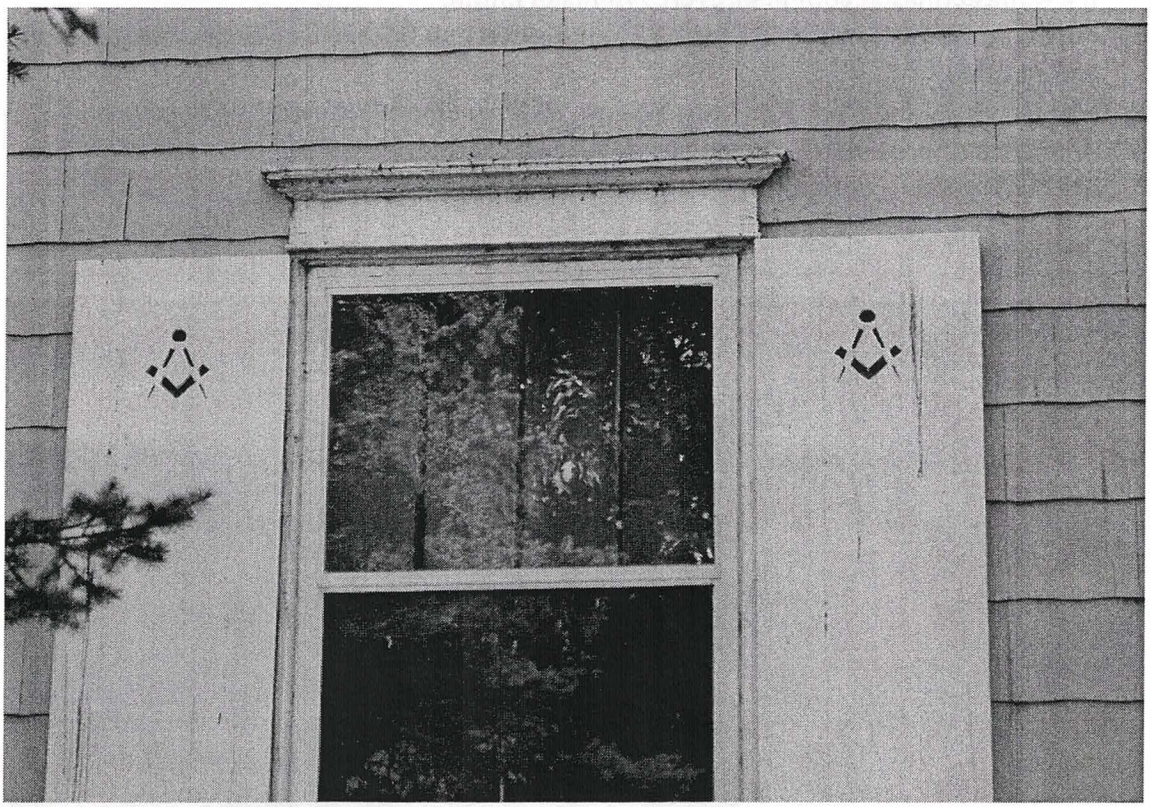
Significant Historical and Architectural Features

Whenever a building, structure, object, or district is under consideration for landmark designation, the Commission on Chicago Landmarks is required to identify the



Top: This round arched window graces the pedimented gable of the north elevation of the Ravenswood Club Building. Bottom: A Classical Revival-style porch extends across the front elevation of the clubhouse.





Top: A Classical Revival-style porch with glazed sidelights details the north elevation of the Ravenswood Club Building. Bottom: Masonic eblems ornament the shutters of the 1902 addition to the clubhouse.

"significant historical and architectural features" of the property. This is done to enable the owners and the public to understand which elements are considered most important to preserve the historical and architectural character of the proposed landmark.

Based upon its preliminary evaluation of the Ravenswood Club Building, the Commission staff recommends that the significant features be identified as:

- All exterior elevations of the building, including rooflines.

Selected Bibliography

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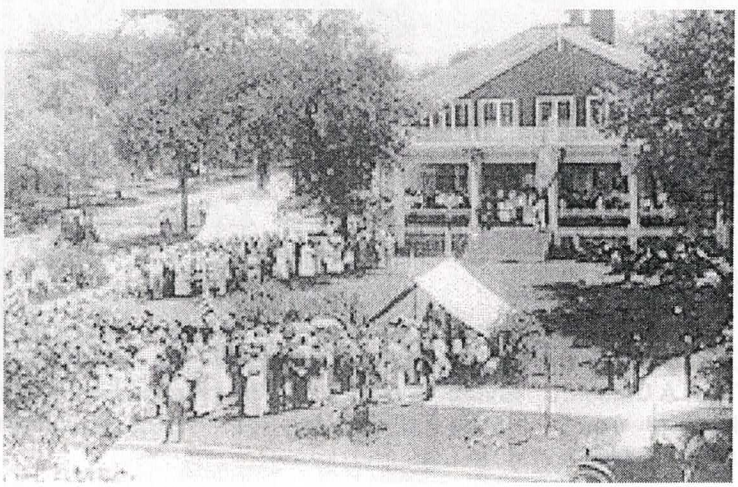

Left: The Ravenswood Club Building during a Fourth of July picnic in 1905.

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Department of Planning and Development, Landmarks Division: pp. 2(bottom), 6, 9(bottom), 11, 13.
Chicago Public Library, Conrad Sulzer Regional Library: pp. 5, 14.
Bush Temple of Music, Landmark Designation Report: p. 9(top left and right).

The Commission on Chicago Landmarks, whose nine members are appointed by the Mayor, was established in 1968 by city ordinance. It is responsible for recommending to the City Council that individual buildings, sites, objects, or entire districts be designated as Chicago Landmarks, which protects them by law. The Commission is staffed by the Chicago Department of Planning and Development, 33 N. LaSalle St., Room 1600, Chicago, IL 60602; (312-744-3200) phone; (312-744-2958) TTY; (312-744-9140) fax; web site, http:www.cityofchicago.org/landmarks.

This Preliminary Summary of Information is subject to possible revision and amendment during the designation proceedings. Only language contained within the City Council's final landmark Designation ordinance should be regarded as final.